

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as shown below. The claims, as currently pending in the application, read as follow.

1. (Currently Amended) A serial communication apparatus ~~for sending and receiving serial data through a data signal line~~ in which one data signal line is used for both sending and receiving signal data, comprising:

buffer means ~~capable of~~ for releasing the data signal line for receiving data through the data signal line; and

control means for controlling said buffer means to release the data signal line after the data signal line is temporarily retained at a second level, if a control signal for instructing a release of the data signal line for receiving data through the data signal line is input when ~~the data signal line is at~~ data is sent through the one data signal line a first level.

2. (Previously Presented) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the buffer means is a three-state buffer for placing the data signal line in one of a high-output impedance level in the release state, the first level and the second level.

3. (Previously Presented) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for stopping an operation of the control means.

4. (Previously Presented) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for stopping an operation of the control means when a communication trouble occurs, and the operation of the control means is restarted when a normal communication is made after communication trouble occurs.

5. (Previously Presented) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said control means controls the buffer means to release the data signal line if the data signal line is at the first level when sending or receiving has ended.

6. (Currently Amended) A serial communication method ~~of sending and receiving serial data through a data signal line~~ in which one data signal line is used for both sending and receiving signal data, comprising:

a first step of temporarily retaining the data signal line at a second level, if a control signal for instructing a release of the data signal line for receiving data through the data signal line is input, when data is sent through the one ~~the~~ data signal line is at a first level; and

a second step of releasing the data signal line for receiving data through the data signal line after retaining the data signal line at the second level in the first step.

7. (Previously Presented) A serial communication method according to claim 6, wherein the serial communication method uses a three-state buffer for placing the data signal line in one of a high-output impedance level in the release state, the first level and the second level.

8. (Previously Presented) A serial communication method according to claim 6, further comprising a step of inhibiting the release of the data signal line.

9. (Previously Presented) A serial communication method according to claim 6, further comprising a step of inhibiting the release of the data signal line when a communication trouble occurs, and a step of allowing the release of the data signal line when a normal communication is made after the communication trouble occurs.

10. (Previously Presented) A serial communication method according to claim 6, further comprising a step of releasing the data signal line if the data signal line is at the first level when sending or receiving has ended.

11. (Currently Amended) A serial communication apparatus ~~for sending and receiving serial data through a data signal line~~ in which one data signal line is used for both sending and receiving signal data, comprising:

a buffer ~~capable of releasing~~ that releases the data signal line for receiving data through the data signal line; and

a controller which controls said buffer to release the data signal line after the data signal line is temporarily retained at a second level, if a control signal for instructing a release of the data signal line for receiving data through the data signal line is input when ~~the data signal line is at~~ data is sent through the one data signal line at a first level.

12. (Previously Presented) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the buffer is a three-state buffer which places the data signal line in one of a high-output impedance level in the release state, the first level and the second level.

13. (Previously Presented) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising a circuit which stops an operation of said controller.

14. (Previously Presented) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising a circuit which stops an operation of the controller when a communication trouble occurs, and restarts the operation of the controller when a normal communication is made after the communication trouble occurs.

15. (Previously Presented) A serial communication apparatus according to claim 11, wherein said controller controls said buffer to release the data signal line, if the data signal line is at the first level when sending or receiving has ended.